

Amistad National Recreation Area

FAQ Sheet

General Information

Amistad- the name means “friendship” in Spanish- is a 65,000-acre recreation area on the Texas and Mexico international border. Located at the convergence of the Rio Grande, Devils, and Pecos Rivers, Amistad offers excellent recreation opportunities, including boating, fishing, hunting, sailing, and camping.

Amistad’s waters are exceptionally clear and blue due to a limestone lake floor and a lack of loose soil in the area. Warm weather year round makes Amistad a mecca for visitors from the US, Mexico, and other countries as well as a winter haven for retirees. Amistad is also home to 10,000 years of human history, including spectacular rock art.

AMISTAD’S MISSION

Amistad National Recreation Area is one of more than 388 National Park Service areas that protect natural and cultural resources and provide for public enjoyment of those resources. Amistad National Recreation Area’s mission is “to provide for public outdoor recreation and use of the lands and waters associated with the United States portion of the reservoir known as Lake Amistad, located on the boundary between the State of Texas and Mexico; and protect the scenic, scientific, cultural, and other values contributing to the public enjoyment of such land and waters.”

WORLD CLASS ARCHEOLOGY

Amistad boasts a rich archeological record that documents 10,000 years of human history and world famous pictographs. Amistad’s two major rock art sites, Panther Cave and Parida Cave, may be accessed by boat at normal lake levels. These sites contain hundreds of pictographs, or rock art, which typically resemble human and animal-like forms. The most of the pictographs in the area were painted approximately 3,500 - 4,500 years ago and share an artistic style known as the Lower Pecos River style. This style is exclusive to Amistad and its surrounding lands. Nearby Seminole Canyon State Park and Historic Site and the Rock Art Foundation Galloway White Shaman Preserve offer similar archeological sites.

DATA

Conservation Level	1117 feet
Record High	1135.66 feet 09.22.74
Record Low	1058.62 feet 08.05.98
Boundary	1144.3 feet
Shoreline	approx. 890 miles of shoreline: 540 in U.S./350 in Mexico

Visitor Information Center US Highway 90W across from Three Rivers RV Park
Headquarters Location 5 miles north of Del Rio on US Hwy 90 West
Ranger Stations Pecos, Diablo East, & Rough Canyon

HEADQUARTERS INFORMATION

Headquarters houses the administrative offices, including the Superintendent's office:

Amistad National Recreation Area

4121 Veterans Blvd.

Del Rio, TX 78840-9350

(830)775-7492 phone

(830)775-7299 fax

Web address: <http://www.nps.gov/amis/>

Email address: amis_superintendent@nps.gov

VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER

Also houses Maintenance and Education and Resource Management offices:

9685 Hwy 90 W

Daily 8am- 5pm except Thanksgiving Day, December 25, and January 1.

(830) 775-7491 phone

(830) 778-9248 fax

Email: Amis_Interpretation@nps.gov

HISTORY

Amistad Dam, managed by the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), was constructed between 1963 and 1969 and dedicated by U.S. President Nixon and Mexican President Diaz Ordaz on September 8, 1969. A 1965 agreement between the National Park Service and IBWC placed NPS in charge of providing recreation and protecting resources at Amistad NRA. In 1990, Congress designated Amistad as a NPS unit, thus changing its name to Amistad National Recreation Area.

ABOUT THE AREA

Del Rio is located 144 miles west of San Antonio and 250 miles east of Big Bend National Park on US Hwy 90 in Val Verde County. Current population is approximately 40,000. Del Rio has a semiarid, warm climate year-round with most summers reaching above 100°F and most winters averaging in the mid-40's (minimum). For more information concerning banks, telephone & cable services, etc., contact the Del Rio Chamber of Commerce at (830) 775-3551.

BIG BEND NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Big Bend Natural History Association is the not-for-profit cooperating association affiliated with Amistad and Big Bend to provide quality educational materials to the

public and support the parks' educational programs with the proceeds. They are based in Big Bend National Park.

Common Questions about Amistad NRA

CAMPING

1) Where can I camp and how long?

The park has 4 campgrounds: 277N, San Pedro, Governor's Landing, and Spur 406. All of them are primitive (they do not offer hookups; only Governors Landing has water) and have fees. No ground fires are allowed. The maximum stay at is 14 consecutive days per campground, but not exceeding 60 days per year. Dispersed camping at Spur 406 is not to exceed 60 days per year. The camping year is June–June.

2) Where do I have to be in designated sites?

You must camp within the campground boundaries at all campgrounds **and** must be in a designated site at Governor's Landing, 277N and San Pedro. Designated sites have covered picnic tables, vault toilets, and grills.

3) Do I have to register?

You must register at all campgrounds either at the registration kiosk or, if available, with the campground host.

4) Group Picnic & Group Camping Areas

Group Camping areas at Rock Quarry, 277 N and San Pedro can be reserved 90 days in advance and there is a 15 person minimum with a \$2/person/night camping fee. Fee must be paid at the time of reservation.

Group picnic areas at Rough Canyon and San Pedro can be reserved 90 days in advance, similar to the group campsites; no overnight use and no fee.

5) What private campgrounds are available in the area?

The Del Rio Chamber of Commerce "Motel and Campground Guide" gives some information. We cannot make recommendations.

6) Why don't you have campground hookups?

Most National Park Service campgrounds do not have hookups - they are usually as primitive as is feasible. If there are RV campgrounds in the NPS they are usually concessionaire operated.

7) Are the campgrounds full?

Amistad's campgrounds rarely fill up.

8) Where are the dump stations?

Free dump stations are at Diablo East and behind the Del Rio Civic Center.

- 9) Can my RV fit into the sites at all the campgrounds?
RV's will fit in all the campground sites except Governors Landing, where we recommend that total vehicle length not exceed 28 feet.
- 10) How many sites do you have at each of the campgrounds?
Unlimited at 406 (406 has 5 covered picnic table/grill sites), approximately 14 sites at Governors Landing, 37 sites at San Pedro plus 5 tent-only sites.
- 11) Which campground is best for tents?
Tents can use any of the sites, but at San Pedro there is a "tent-only" area for 5 tents. 406 and 277N have more grass.
- 12) Is there backcountry camping available?
Backcountry camping is only available from boats. You can camp anywhere along the shore that is not directly under any developed area.

FISHING

- 1) Is the lake stocked?
The lake is stocked by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Species that have been stocked in the past include: Largemouth bass, Florida bass, Smallmouth bass, Striped bass, Walleye, Northern pike, Muskellunge, Channel catfish, Blue catfish, and White crappie. Striped bass is the **only** fish that has been stocked since 1992.
- 2) How is the fishing?
Fishing and boating-related businesses and any of the marinas have the most up-to-date information on fishing. Generally speaking, fishing seasons are spring and fall for white bass and striper, spring for black bass, and late fall for catfish.
- 3) Where can I fish from shore?
Fishing is legal from shore anywhere outside of harbors or designated swim areas.
- 4) Where can I get a fishing license?
Wal-Mart, Diablo East Marina, Exxon Stations, Anglers Lodge, etc, and most convenience stores sell them. Anyone fishing over 17 needs one, except some people over 64. See Fishing Guide published by Texas Parks and Wildlife for details.
- 5) Where can I get a Mexican fishing and boat license?
Amistad Marine on Hwy 90 W.
Fishermans Headquarters at the 277 N "Y" on Hwy 90.
- 6) What do most people fish for?
Bass and Catfish.

7) What kind of fish are in the lake?

Back of Amistad brochure is good reference. There is a complete fish list available in the handout box under the front desk.

8) Where can you get a duplicate fishing license? How?

You can only get them from the place you originally bought the license.

9) Where are the courtesy fishing docks located?

Courtesy docks are located at Governor's Landing at the end of the peninsula and under the Highway 90 bridge, and at 454 facing Blackbrush (take a left when pavement ends). Water level permitting there are docks at Blackbrush, at Rough Canyon and on Viewpoint Drive at Diablo East.

WILDLIFE

Birding highlights of Amistad NRA and Del Rio, Texas:

Amistad NRA hosts numerous colonies of nesting Interior least terns. They nest on exposed, cobble islands and are visible April through August foraging around the lake. Without a boat, try using spotting scopes from lakeside at Spur 454 and Spur 406. Ringed and green kingfishers are occasionally seen in riparian areas, such as the Rio Grande below Amistad Dam (scope from the dam; open 10am-6pm daily), along San Felipe Creek in Del Rio, and along other streams in Val Verde County.

Amistad has a wide diversity of avian species; some southern species are near their northern limits. Kiskadees are common in wooded areas, such as south Del Rio, and green jays have been seen in various locations around the river and town. Olive sparrows skulk in heavy brush while painted buntings add brilliant color. Changing seasons bring wintering bald eagles or summering osprey. Eastern residents such as Carolina wrens meet western cactus wrens. Since Amistad and Del Rio is a lightly birded area, careful observers may find rare or unusual sightings.

1) What wildlife can I see around here and where?

Hunt areas are good outside of hunting season. You can see javelina, deer, turkey, ringtail cats, cotton tails and jackrabbits.

BOATING

1) Where can I rent a boat?

At the Diablo East (Forever Resorts) Marina and the Rough Canyon Marina. Active or retired military may rent boats and use the facilities at the Air Force Southwinds Marina.

Canoes or Kayaks can be rented from Amistad Water Sports (across from American Campground on Hwy 90 W or at [Ruthie's Rentals](#) in the Rough Canyon Area.

2) What are the rules for boating?

The boat needs to be registered in Texas and you need to abide by all Coast Guard regulations (PFD's, fire extinguishers, etc.) listed in the Boating Safety pamphlet. Rangers will conduct a free courtesy inspection on request on land.

3) Where can I launch a boat?

Diablo East, Rough Canyon, Air Force Marina, Pecos, and Box Canyon. Depending on current lake level, other locations may serve as boat ramps, such as the ends of Spur 454, 406, and 277N. Diablo East and Rough Canyon ramps will be usable at most any lake level. The others may be closed due to low water.

4) Where can I register my boat? Get a new state sticker?

Any boat with a motor must be registered (have **state** sticker) in Texas. You can do this at the County courthouse where you get vehicle license plates.

LAKE FACTS

1) When was the dam built?

Started in 1963, finished in 1968, dedicated in 1969.

2) Which direction does the wind usually blow on the lake?

Wind blows from the southeast. During spring it often comes from the north.

3) How many acres is the lake?

65,000 acres at conservation level (1117). This includes the Mexican portion of the lake.

4) How many shoreline miles on the American side of lake?

545 miles.

5) How far is it from Visitor Information Center to:

Amistad Dam	3 miles to center of the dam
Pecos	34 miles to ranger station
San Pedro	3.5 miles to campground
Diablo East	1.5 miles to Diablo East turnoff
Governors Landing	3 miles to GL turnoff
Box Canyon	8.1 miles to turnoff
406	28.5 miles to campground
277N	12.0 miles to campground
Rough Canyon	25 miles to ranger station

HIKING

Hiking is limited at Amistad. There are two short nature trails at Pecos and Diablo East. Visitors may hike along the shoreline. Recommend Seminole Canyon State Park, Devils River State Natural Area, or Big Bend National Park for extensive hiking.

LOCAL INFORMATION

- 1) What is there to do here in Del Rio and surrounding area?
Val Verde Winery, Alamo Village, Seminole Canyon State Park, Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center.
- 2) How far are we from Big Bend?
248 miles- approximately 4-5 hours drive.
- 3) Where is the nearest phone, mailbox, etc.?
US Post Office is on Bedell. Go from Hwy 90 (heading east from VIC), and turn left on Cantu, right on Bedell then the post office is on the left., pay phone at Exxon Station on Hwy 90, about 2 miles west of VIC.
- 4) Where can we get showers?
At Amistad RV Park, Holiday, American, or the other campgrounds.
- 5) Where can we rent a vehicle?
Enterprise Rent-a-Car on Highway 90, or B&W on Avenue G.
- 6) Where can we do our laundry?
Next to the Pico on Veterans Blvd., or next to Peppers convenience store, Veterans Blvd and 15th St. as well as other places in town.

MEXICO

- 1) Is it safe to cross into Mexico? Take taxi? walk?
Mexico is safe if you use common sense. You can easily park near the international bridge and walk over (about 15 minutes) or get a taxi.
- 2) Is there parking at the bridge for large RVs?
There is a small lot near the bridge, but it will not handle large RVs.

SWIMMING / SCUBA

- 1) Where can I scuba dive?

Anywhere in the lake (except near developed areas). Dive flags must be used. The scuba cove at Diablo East (area roped off for scuba) is a good place because no boats are allowed and you don't need dive flags. The ranch house at Castle Canyon is another popular place.

- 2) Where can I get air to scuba?
At Amistad Marine on Hwy. 90 W.

- 3) Where can I swim?
Anywhere except harbors or fishing docks. *All swimming is at your own risk.*
There is a level swim area at Governor's Landing Day Use Area, under the Hwy 90 Bridge. Turn on Spur 349 toward Amistad Dam and then turn right at the Governors Landing sign.

ARCHEOLOGY

- 1) Where can I see archeological sites? On foot? By boat?
By boat, you can launch at the Pecos River boat ramp near Comstock, or at Box Canyon boat ramp on the Rio Grande take a boat trip to Panther Cave or Parida Cave. Accessibility is dependent on lake levels. These are the ONLY sites accessible on the Rio Grande where people can get out of their boat and go up and look at a site; all others are off limits to the public or are located on private property. Using binoculars, boaters can look up at Indian Cliffs on the Devils River and see pictographs; this is a "binocular trip only" by boat.

Without a boat, the only sites accessible are at Seminole Canyon State Park and Historic Site. Visitors can only hike to Fate Bell Shelter on a guided trip, 10am and 3pm Wednesday through Sunday. In the summer, the afternoon trip may not be offered due to the heat. The ½ mile hike involves rough surfaces and many steps.

- 2) What is a good publication to learn more about archeology of this region?
The best book for the money is Elaine Acker's book "Life in a Rock Shelter: Prehistoric Indians of the Lower Pecos" at \$19.95. This book covers: basket weaving, stone tool production, the cooking of food items, and rock art. The best rock art book for the money is Zintgraff and Turpin's book "Pecos River Rock Art: A Photographic Essay." This book deals strictly with rock art, has a nice 10-page write-up on the pictographs, and lots of great photos. The downside is that it exclusively deals with rock art and overlooks the archeology.

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

- 1) What is the 800 number for Texas Parks and Wildlife in Austin?
1-800-792-1112

2) What is the phone number for the game wardens?

The game wardens work out of the Department of Public Safety office on Veterans Blvd. (830) 775-3569.

3) What role does NPS, and Texas Parks and Wildlife have on Lake Amistad?

Law enforcement officers from each agency can enforce the same laws on the lake. NPS operates the recreational facilities. Texas Parks and Wildlife is in charge of hunting and fishing licenses, stocking the lake, etc.

MISC INFO

1) How do I get someone to talk to my school or community group?

Have them talk to Lisa Evans, Amistad NRA's Education Specialist.

Lisa_Evans@nps.gov or (830) 775-7491 x 223.

2) How many people work at Amistad NRA?

About 30.

3) What is the phone number and address for the Secretary of Interior?

Secretary of the Interior

1849 C St. NW

Washington, DC 20240

(202)208-7351